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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MNUC](#) [KNNP](#) [AS](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT BLOCKS SHIPMENTS BOUND FOR IRAN

REF: CANBERRA 79

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Edgard D. Kagan for reasons 1.4(a)(b)
(d)(h)

Summary

¶1. (C/NF) Australia has blocked several export shipments bound for Iran because of concerns that the goods could be used in Iran's uranium enrichment program. This news comes as Australia is looking for ways to increase pressure on Iran if it becomes necessary. The news is unlikely to cause a major public outcry and demonstrates Australia's commitment to turning up the pressure on Iran over its nuclear weapons program. END SUMMARY.

Defence Minister Stops Shipments

¶2. (U) Australia has stopped four export shipments bound for Iran on concerns that the materials could be used in that country's nuclear weapons program. Defence Minister John Faulkner used his power on under the 15 year old "Weapons of Mass Destruction Act" to block the shipment. The provision had been used only once in its history prior to being used four times in as many months. All five incidents involved shipments bound for Iran.

¶3. (C/NF) Arms Control Section Director Jane Hardy of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) said that in blocking these shipments Australia is only meeting its obligation under U.N. sanctions against Iran's nuclear weapons program. One of the shipments contained pumps that could have been used in nuclear power plants and the other three were blocked because they contained nickel alloy, which has numerous nuclear applications. Hardy said that the government consulted with the companies involved prior to blocking the shipments and acted on clear evidence suggesting that the materials in question were bound for the Iranian nuclear program. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has publically called Faulkner's actions "entirely appropriate."

Australia Ready to Pressure Iran

¶4. (C/NF) This news comes as Australia is considering options to increase pressure on Iran. Late last year, DFAT drafted a paper outlining measures that could be taken. National Security Advisor Duncan Lewis recently told us that Australia understands and supports the U.S. assessment of the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program (reftel). Australia will look to U.S. leadership on this issue, but is ready to support any efforts to sanction the regime either through the U.N. or outside of it.

Comment

15. (C/NF) This news demonstrates the commitment of the Australian government to turning up the pressure on Iran. Despite some sensationalized reporting in the press, the news of the blocked shipments is unlikely to cause any public outcry as the nonproliferation agenda is popular with the Australian public.

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